



## **NH Air National Guard sergeant wins big money for bright idea**

**By 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Sherri Pierce  
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**PEASE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, N.H.** – A New Hampshire Air National Guard sergeant came up with a idea that saved the Air Force thousands of dollars and earned him some cash, too.

Tech. Sgt. Frank Stephens, Berwick, ME, was awarded \$10,000 from the Air Force Innovative Development through Employee Awareness (IDEA) program on Nov. 21.

He suggested a way to repair an F-108 cowling support rod that is usually thrown out when it fails to operate correctly. An F-108 cowling support rod holds the engine cover of a KC135-R model open while it is being worked on.

“After seeing several cowling support rods being tossed in the metal scrap bin and knowing what the cost of a new one was, I thought is was such a waste,” Stephens said. “So I took one apart and found out a spring retaining washer corroded away keeping the rod from fully retracting.”

Instead of ordering a new cowling rod which costs about \$800, Stephens suggested installing a 26 cent stainless steel retaining washer to replace the corroded one.

The estimated first year saving is \$81,729.38.

“I was very surprised a simple suggestion could amount in such a savings to the Air Force,” Stephens added.

Stephens found out about the IDEA program through his quality assurance manager and encourages everyone to make a suggestion to improve a process.

IDEAs can earn 15 percent of the estimated first-year savings with a minimum award of \$200 and a maximum award of \$10,000.